

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### PowerLight Corporation

Corporation for Manufacturing Excellence (Manex)

#### PowerLight Takes a Shine to Lean

##### Client Profile:

PowerLight Corporation, located in Berkeley, CA, is the nation's leading designer, manufacturer and installer of large scale, grid-connected solar electric systems. Founded in 1991, PowerLight's distributed generation products produce reliable, affordable clean power for businesses and government agencies worldwide. Inc Magazine has ranked PowerLight Corporation among the top 500 fastest growing privately held companies for the past four years. Today, PowerLight has worldwide offices and a full line of commercial solar electric products and energy efficiency services. PowerLight employs 50 people.

##### Situation:

With PowerLight's rapid growth over the past few years, management looked for ways to optimize operating costs and improve the overall productivity in the organization. PowerLight contacted the Corporation for Manufacturing Excellence (Manex), a NIST MEP network affiliate, in order to learn and implement lean manufacturing principles throughout the company.

##### Solution:

Manex delivered a one week Kaizen blitz based on 5S Principles and Visual Control. The PowerLight team learned 5S through a simulation exercise and each individual was empowered to identify areas of waste within the organization. Manex helped implement the changes and within one week, PowerLight realized immediate and dramatic results. PowerLight adopted the lean principles and has since organized two of their own Kaizen events.

##### Results:

- \* Work-in-Process reduced by more than 20 percent.
- \* Increased productivity by 20 percent.
- \* Reduced lead time by 20 percent.
- \* Increased employee empowerment--factory workers are looking for ways to improve and have a new sense of ownership of their workstations.
- \* Heightened awareness of non-value added activities
- \* Application of lean principles throughout the company

##### Testimonial:

"When we wanted to improve our manufacturing operations, we turned to Manex for their knowledge of lean manufacturing. They delivered and empowered our employees to make our company run more efficiently."

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Alejandro Abalos, Vice President of Manufacturing